

## Column: The decline and near-death of cursive writing

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SEPT. 16, 2012



JACKSON, MI – School is back in session, so this is a good time to explore a common educational myth. It's the myth about handwriting.

"I went to 10 graduation open houses this year," an acquaintance explained, "and every thank-you card I received was written in printed letters instead of cursive writing. Every one."

"Schools stopped teaching cursive writing years ago," I said.

This so-called fact is believed by almost everyone old enough to remember John Belushi, the Bionic Woman, or Big Shef burgers from [Burger Chef](#).

To my surprise, fact-checking revealed it's not true. Not precisely true, anyway.

"Cursive writing is part of the ELA (English language arts) common core curriculum. It's expected that schools will teach it," said Susan Townsend, director of instruction at the Jackson County Intermediate School District.

"We teach it at the end of the second grade and in third grade," said Willye Pigott, who oversees elementary curriculum for Jackson Public Schools.

So what explains all those young adults who write in printed letters? They are [no myth](#). My 18-year-old son writes nothing except his signature in cursive.

Here's one factor. Cursive writing is still taught, but it is not emphasized in classrooms nearly as much as in past eras. Grades in penmanship, for example, are basically obsolete.

"It's not like it was when we were in school," said Pigott.

Emphasis on cursive writing can vary from school to school, and maybe teacher to teacher, educators said. Queen's Elementary School, a Catholic school in Jackson, reinforces the skill through sixth grade, said Principal Liz Hartley, by requiring some assignments to be written in cursive.

“We’ve kind of debated it back and forth,” Hartley said. “We still think it is important to be able to write your name, and it is good for brain development.”

JPS and many other schools do not require students to write assignments in cursive after they learn it. “Oh, no,” Pigott said. “We’re focusing now on the technological age. The focus is on the keyboard and touch-screens for iPads and tablet devices.”

Many students never fall into the habit of writing in cursive, probably because they see no reason to develop the habit. They might well expect that soon nothing will be written with pen or pencil, anyway.

Perhaps that’s a crying shame, but I am reminded of old-timers in my own youth who grumbled because schools stopped teaching Latin.

Times change, and so do important skills. But I do miss Burger Chef.

Flory, Brad. "The decline and near-death of cursive writing." *The Bradosphere*. MLive Media Group, 16 Sept 2012. Web. Web. 30 Sep. 2012. <[http://blog.mlive.com/bradosphere/2012/09/column\\_exploring\\_the\\_decline\\_a.html](http://blog.mlive.com/bradosphere/2012/09/column_exploring_the_decline_a.html)>.

1. What is the author’s purpose?
2. Who is the intended audience?
3. What is the main idea of the article?
4. What are three supporting points for the main idea?